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United States Senator for Idaho

NEWS RELEASE

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IDAHO DELEGATION QUESTIONS CHU OVER YUCCA

Energy Secretary asked to uphold plans for waste removal agreement

Washington, DC – Idaho's Congressional Delegation has written Energy Secretary Steven Chu to express concern over the Obama Administration's plan to scale back funding for the Yucca Mountain nuclear storage facility in Nevada. Yucca Mountain is slated to be the permanent repository for more than 300 metric tons of nuclear materials produced by the U.S. military and 4,400 cubic meters of high-level waste that was sent to Idaho for temporary storage. Under court-ordered provisions of the 1995 "Batt Agreement," the waste must be removed from Idaho by 2035, but the Obama Administration's Fiscal Year 2010 budget proposes deep cutbacks in planning for the Department of Energy (DOE) to open Yucca Mountain.

"The language included in the FY 2010 Budget puts this milestone at risk and ensures that Idaho retains the Federal Government's liabilities for the continued storage of this waste, which is unacceptable," wrote Senators Mike Crapo and Jim Risch and Congressmen Mike Simpson and Walt Minnick. "Deep geologic disposal is the only disposal option for this type of defense waste. If DOE is not going to continue development of the Yucca Mountain facility then we would like you to explain to us how the Federal Government will maintain its commitment to the State and remove this waste out of Idaho by 2035."

Delegation members said they would like to meet with Dr. Chu to discuss the situation further. Crapo noted he will raise the issue with Chu next week during a meeting of the Senate Budget Committee, of which he is a member. Risch questioned Secretary Chu today about the disposal of waste from INL during an Energy Committee hearing. Risch said it was clear by his response that further meetings are needed with the Secretary on the issue. Simpson, who is a member of the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, will also be participating in Department of Energy oversight hearings concerning federal spending in the upcoming weeks. He will be addressing this specific concern with Secretary Chu, along with a number of other oversight issues.

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